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# Ruach Hiddush - רוח חידוש

## רבנים וחזנים למען חופש דת ושוויון

### Rabbis and Cantors for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel

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## Introduction

February 22, 2018 - 7 אדר 5778

Friends,

Must the People who sought asylum provide asylum to the persecuted when the formerly persecuted have achieved autonomy?

May a Jewish State demand shabbat observance of all its people as a matter of culture, or is that religious coercion?

Are Haredi prayers in yeshivas as powerful a protector of the State of Israel as the IDF?

The answers of Israelis appear in this week's Peace Index, and show a nation divided over the meaning of living in a Jewish State. What would Israel look like if there

## The Peace Index: January 2018

by Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

**The Peace Index column for January focuses on two domestic matters that have been at the heart of the public discourse for weeks. One is the issue of the asylum seekers; the other is the question of opening businesses and services on Shabbat, which is part of the bedrock debate on the role of religion in the society and the state. This month's index will also look at an issue that is not only domestic: U.S. president Donald Trump's approach to Israel and the Palestinians and his declarations on the subject of Jerusalem.**

**Opening businesses on Shabbat:** Against the backdrop of the ongoing struggles over the nature of Shabbat in Israel, and the move by Interior Minister Deri to tighten enforcement among the local authorities via the "convenience-stores law," we

were majority rule on religious issues?

That omnipresent issue could be decided if Israel became the State of the Jews, as intended by its Founders, rather than The Jewish State, as currently practiced. What is the role of the ancient category of *mamzerut* in modern life? Must non-believers be coerced by ancient categories dependent upon a theology they do not share, just because they choose to live in the only Jewish State in the world? Not to mention the continuing debate over agunot that is intimately connected?

My heart breaks when I read of women and children whose lives are nearly destroyed by a rabbinate that refuses, as one woman said, to help her humanely resolve the problems exclusively entrusted to the rabbinate.

So much of the content of these debates turns on the status of women. We in the U.S. have in recent months also witnessed the results when powerlessness controls women's lives; and it's not pretty. Fear, coercion, exploitation and depression often follow. Can we imagine ourselves living the destinies of those we love controlled

gauged where the Jewish public stands on this question.

**Devoting themselves to Torah study?** We sought responses to the claim that the study of Torah by haredi young people protects Israel no less than the military service of non-haredi young people.

**Haredim in the government:** Only a minority of the Jewish public (27%) prefers a government that includes the haredi parties, while the majority (53%) prefers a government without them.

**Statements by rabbis against military service by women and against the chief of staff:** A majority of the Jewish public (61%) supports Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman's denunciation of the statements by Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef and Rabbi Shlomo Aviner opposing military service by women.

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

## **Doomed At Birth**

**By Michele Chabin**

**For some Jews, 'mamzer' is more than a curse word. It's a life sentence of secrecy, stigma and shame.**

... She discovered she was pregnant soon after he raped her. In her thirties, childless and aching to be a mother, she decided to raise this unexpected baby on her own.

Back then Sarah, who had divorced a few years earlier in a U.S. civil court, had no idea that her child could be considered a "mamzer" – the closest thing Judaism has to a bastard or an untouchable – not because her child was conceived during a rape, but because, according to Jewish law, Sarah had been married when she was raped.

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

by sovereigns who have their own goals and not ours uppermost in their minds? As noted in the article on *mamzerut*: once upon a time there were remedies. But the State sponsored rabbinate has no incentives to labor for the benefit of the common people, least of all women. See the unrepentant misogynistic comments by Rabbi Yosef Kelner about women's innate abilities.

Our colleague at Hiddush, David Bogomolny, authored [a most interesting article in Times of Israel](#), which I have chosen to include both because it's interesting and for the model it provides: "Do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place." (Avot 2:4) If only the official rabbinate thought, as David writes so articulately, how to stand in another's place. What does that require? If we take "speaking the language of the other" as metaphor, it might propose a solution to many of our issues.

We'd love to receive your comments at:  
ruach@hiddush.org

חג פורים שמח,

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## Women are 'weak-minded,' rabbi of West Bank yeshiva tells students

JTA

**A rabbi who teaches at a pre-military yeshiva in the West Bank told students that women are "weak minded" and "just babble." Rabbi Yosef Kelner also said women have a "limited capacity" for spirituality in the footage broadcast Tuesday by Hadashot news taken at a class on marriage and family.**

... He issued an apology shortly after the footage was broadcast.

"I'm sorry this sort of thing ever came out of me. Sometimes a person fails. I wouldn't say such things today," he said.

Kelner added that his colleagues at the yeshiva are "opposed to both the style and content" of the comments.

The yeshiva reportedly has distanced itself from the rabbi's remarks.

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

## Rabbi backtracks on apology after deprecating comments about women

By Elisha Ben Kimon

**After issuing apology for discussing the 'spiritual limitation of women' during lesson at pre-military academy, Rabbi Yosef Kelner seems to backtrack, saying his words were edited foolishly and he does not regret what he said.**

... Kelner argued that "malicious and foolish editing" of the recording of his lesson led to a misunderstanding of his meaning. "The long

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sentence that clarifies my intention was omitted: When I say that women are spiritually limited, the intention is that 'the high brow of world trends, the increase of global perceptions, is not where we expect women to reach notable achievements.' The omission precludes understanding that there is a deeper context to the words other than 'they are stupid,'" he wrote.

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)**Speak to me in Arabic****By David Bogomolny**

**I'm not a political activist of any sort, but I do want to move beyond simply existing side by side with the Arabs around me. I want to gain more insights into their culture and worldviews. I want to engage with them in a substantive way. Most importantly, I want to practice my Arabic with native Arabic speakers, but I don't know where to turn.**

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רו"ם ה'דו"ש היא ארגון של רבנים וחזנים הפועל למימוש מלא של הבטחת מגילת הצעמאות לחופש דת ושוויון. מימוש הבטחה זו חיוני לחיזוק זהותה של מדינת ישראל כמדינה יהודית ודמוקרטית ולהמשך השותפות עם העם היהודי לתפוצותיו.

Ruach Hiddush is a network of Rabbis and Cantors working to fully realize the promise of Israel's Declaration of Independence, which guarantees religious freedom and equality. The fulfillment of this promise is vital for strengthening Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, and for maintaining the solidarity of world Jewry.

מיזם ש ל ה'דו"ש project of Hiddush

